

Public Works Committee
Minutes, Tuesday, March 1, 2011
Town Room, Town Hall

Attending---

Committee: Steve Braun (Chair), Michael Cann, Don George, Christine Gray-Mullen, Charlie Moran, Guilford Mooring (Superintendent). Guests: Rob Crowner, Lynn Grabowski, Michael White.

Administrative:

Voted to approve minutes of February 8, 2011 meeting. 5-0-0

Confirmed dates for next meetings: April 5, 2011(Public Hearings on Lincoln Avenue traffic calming, Spring Street parking lot), May 3, 2011.

Old business:

Discussion and vote on “complete streets” proposal brought by Rob Crowner. The committee discussed the proposal, attached, and asked a number of questions about the proposal. Among the questions asked:

What is the connection between the proposal and the National Complete Streets Coalition? Some on the committee felt that the Town did not need to buy into this particular advocacy group to achieve the goals of the proposal.

Another question: What will be the effect of this proposal, if adopted, on existing procedures for approving changes or improvements on Town roads? Mr. Mooring responded that it could increase the length of the process if the changes required under “complete streets” meant that issues such as tree removal or property acquisition needed to be discussed in a public hearing.

Another question: the approval and waiver process in the proposal, as described, seems to encroach on the Select Board’s role as keeper of the Town roads.

Another question: what is the connection between this proposal and the existing Pavement Improvement Plan (PIP) to be paid for by the upcoming road bond? In the email accompanying the proposal, Rob Crowner proposed that future chapter 90 funds be spent on bringing the roadways designated in the PIP up to the standards described in the Complete Streets proposal. Charlie Moran argued that at last fall’s Special Town Meeting the Town had voted for the Pavement Improvement Plan with the understanding that the bond funding was for pavement repair “catch-up,” and that future chapter 90 funds would be spent largely on maintaining and extending the reach of this pavement repair, as stated in the JCPC report of October 10, 2010.

Stephen Braun suggested that the proposal itself, and its relation to the Pavement Improvement Plan, could be divided and treated as separate issues. So it was moved:

The Public Works Committee endorses the "complete streets" approach to creating and repairing roadways and sidewalks in the town of Amherst (as described in the attached policy proposal) and recommends that a complete implementation plan be developed by the Transportation &

Bicycle Committee. The motion was **Defeated 1-4-0**.

Further discussion of the relationship between this proposal and the existing PIP was deferred until next meeting.

New business:

Public Hearing, Wildwood Safe Roads to School

Guilford Mooring described the project in its most recent form. This is the second round, after the State has heard and responded to the comments in the first round. In response to these comments, the proposed sidewalk on the west side of the Middle School parking lot has been deleted and the existing sidewalk on the east side of the lot will be improved; the proposed bike shelter has been replaced by a larger parking pad for bicycles; there will be a raised crosswalk at the entrance to the school driveway; and the sidewalk from the East Pleasant/Strong Street intersection to Wildwood will be replaced. There will be a crosswalk across the western terminus of Strong Street. The State did not accept the Town's requests for improvements at the Chestnut Street/East Pleasant intersection, and did not accept the request for sidewalk improvement west of Wildwood to Red Gate Lane.

Michael White, a resident who walks his children to Wildwood, noted that the streets leading to and from Wildwood—particularly Strong Street--have little or no markings or signs alerting drivers that they are entering a school zone. He asked for a flashing "school zone" light on Strong Street at the top of the hill beside the cemetery.

Mass Highway will have their hearing March 24. Their project is slated for advertisement this year, with construction to start next spring.

It was moved and seconded: That PWC supports the proposed Wildwood Safe Roads to School project as detailed in the submitted mass DOT 25/75% Design Drawings dated 2/28/10. **Voted: 5-0-0.**

Updates.

Guilford Mooring reported on recent flooding on Cottage Street, and said that it was likely related to water flow in Tan Brook, which runs through a culvert there. Cottage Street is the first low spot; then Kendrick Park. He looked ahead to an issue that is likely to come before PWC in the near future: a subcommittee of the Planning Board is working on the Master Plan and how it gets implemented. Insofar as the planning impacts Town roads and ways, PWC will be brought into the loop.

Storm-water utility.

Christine Gray-Mullen had given to the Committee at its February meeting a substantial overview of the issue of storm-water control and treatment. She said that now that we had an understanding of the larger picture, she would bring to us a specific case, that of Westfield MA. Guilford Mooring said that the question of storm-water treatment and how to pay for it would

come before the Committee in the near future. DPW would flesh out a plan for funding storm-sewer maintenance and repairs and in November bring it into the Town's budget process.